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ABSTRACT

Three questions bearing on M. Janowitz's community-integration hypothesis were pursued in a study for which community ties and newspaper subscribing were the focal dimensions. The questions addressed were the following: (1) Are community-church ties positively associated with subscribing to a local church newspaper? (2) Are church ties positively associated with subscribing to commercial newspapers in the community? and (3) When ties to church are combined with ties to volunteer associations, is the likelihood of subscribing to commercial newspapers enhanced? Subjects, 350 members of a Catholic diocese in the northwestern United States, supplied information concerning their church membership, participation in church-related groups, identification with church parish and diocese, and participation in local volunteer associations. Results showed that church ties were positively associated with subscribing to the church newspaper, with participation in church groups having the strongest relationship. Some ties to local churches were positively associated with commercial newspaper subscribing, especially participation in church groups. Ties to church and volunteer associations had separate and joint positive relationships to commercial newspaper subscribing, demonstrating evidence of an additive effect. All findings were consistent with the community integration hypothesis. (Author/FL)

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NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIBING AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION:

Separating Facts from Artifacts

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and

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NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIBING AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION:

Separating Facts from Artifacts

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Three questions bearing on Janowitz's classic community-integration hypothesis are pursued in a study for which community ties and newspaper subscribing are the focal dimensions. Are church-community ties positively associated with subscribing to a local church newspaper? Are church ties positively associated with subscribing to commercial newspapers in the local city-community? When ties to church are combined with ties to volunteer associations, is the likelihood of subscribing to commercial newspapers enhanced?

These questions were pursued in a study of 500 members of a Catholic diocese in the Northwest. Measures were obtained for church membership, participation in church-related groups, identification with church parish and diocese, and participation in local volunteer associations. A proportionate, random sample of parishioners was designed; telephone interviews were employed with three callbacks and random replacement procedures, resulting in a 70 percent completion rate.

Findings were that: (1) Church ties were positively associated with subscribing to the church newspaper, with participation in church groups having the strongest relationship. (2) Some ties to local churches were positively associated with commercial newspaper subscribing, most especially participation in church groups. (3) Ties to church and volunteer associations had separate and joint positive relationships to commercial newspaper subscribing, demonstrating evidence of an additive effect. All these results were consistent with the community integration hypothesis.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIBING AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION:
Separating Facts from Artifacts

Introduction

This study is part of a program of research on the relationship of community ties and media use, and is grounded in the earlier theorizing of Park (1929), Merton (1950), Janowitz (1952), and Edelstein and Larsen (1960). Stamm and Fortini-Campbell (1983) differentiated a wide variety of community ties associated with newspaper subscribing and/or readership. Weis and Stamm (1984) extended the theorizing to consider a church organization as a type of community, specifying several organizational ties related to church newspaper subscribing and reading.

Some important questions are raised by the presence of the many conceptually similar correlates of media use, however. To what extent are community-city and organizational-community ties inter-related? Given the existence of multiple ties to city-community and organization-community, what is their joint relationship to commercial newspaper use? Is the presence of one city-community tie sufficient for newspaper use, or do additional ties result in a higher incidence of use? Which previously reported bivariate relationships are spurious?

The present study pursues these questions from the point of view of Janowitz's "community integration hypothesis," examining ties to a local church organization within the city-community, and

then a tie to another type of organization within the city-community, volunteer groups. These ties are related both separately and jointly to subscribing to a church newspaper and to local commercial newspapers.

Theoretical perspectives

Starting with Robert Park (1929), community theorizing has consistently related newspaper use[1] to the individual's ties with a local community. A major difficulty with this body of theory, however, has been the vagueness and confusion surrounding the concept of "community." Few have been that explicit about stating a definition of community tie for which this relationship holds. Since community has been defined in the literature in many ways (Hillery, 1959), and since there are also a number of ways of being tied to a community (Stamm and Fortini-Campbell, 1983), there are a number of community-tie variables potentially covered by a community theory. This article stays within one of the major domains of the community concept, structural ties.[2] This entails viewing a community as a collection of organizations, a perspective in which previous research has been concerned primarily with relating newspaper use and ties to various kinds of community organizations.

Merton (1950) was among the first to introduce ties to local organizations (e.g., secret societies, fraternal groups, and service clubs) as explanatory of newspaper use. He distinguished two broad types of community ties -- "localite" and "cosmopolitan" --

partly on the basis of membership in local organizations. The localite type was described by Merton as having a restricted interest in the contents of local newspapers.

One thing we must observe about Merton's view is that he was concerned with community ties in the aggregate. To a large extent, Merton's theorizing followed his data, and his data showed that in most cases those influentials who read local newspapers belonged to more than one local organization.

Janowitz (1952), however, did not embrace the sweeping "gemeinschaft/gesellschaft" dichotomy (e.g., "localite/cosmopolitan") that had so strongly influenced the thinking of Park and Merton. He was not so much concerned with which kind of newspaper an individual would read, but with newspaper readership as one of the social mechanisms by which the individual was integrated into a city-community.

Janowitz was particularly concerned with ties to a community through participation in and identification with facilities and institutions of the local community. He hypothesized that greater community integration should be associated with more newspaper use:

> . . . the local community resident in varying degrees participates in and identifies with the facilities and institutions of the local community; as such, indices of greater community integration should be related to more community newspaper readership.

The careful reader will discern that Janowitz' reasoning is somewhat ambiguous. Does newspaper readership tend to precede or follow such ties?

Greer (1962) was clearer on this point in building on Janowitz's finding that participation in volunteer associations was positively related to readership. Greer argued, too, that members of volunteer organizations, whom he called "community actors," would be exceptionally tuned to community news as reported in the local press. But he elaborated on how this would be the case:

> Insofar as they are committed members of common interest organizations, they have additional reasons for following the trend of government events, for these frequently affect the ends and means of their group.

Newspaper use in Greer's view is clearly seen to be a consequence of belonging to local organizations.

The theorizing of Park, Merton, Janowitz and Greer has provided most of the groundwork for subsequent research on newspaper use and ties to other kinds of organizations as well. Recent authors, for example, have tested the relationship of readership to membership in local work and professional organizations. Brown and Daves (1979) found that an index of "occupational attachment" was positively associated with certain reading preferences (e.g., sports/recreation content). More importantly, however, they found the index was unrelated to measures of readership (e.g., issues read per week and minutes of reading per day). Stamm and Fortini-Campbell (1981) examined the relationship of readership and subscribing to identification with local work and professional groups. They, too, found no relationship.

Evidence in the literature relating newspaper use to church ties is more promising. Janowitz (1952) demonstrated a relationship between community newspaper readership and church attendance. Westley and Severin (1964) reported that church members were less likely than non-members to be newspaper non-readers. Similarly, Sobal and Jackson-Beeck (1981) found a tendency for newspaper readers to attend church services on a weekly basis. Most recently, Weis and Stamm (1984) demonstrated a relationship between such ties as (church) community identification and closeness, taken separately, with subscribing to and reading a church newspaper. They had not yet explored the relationship of church ties to the use of commercial newspapers.

Pursuing community "integration"

The fundamental point of departure for this study, therefore, is Janowitz' community integration hypothesis. Given the broadness of his hypothesis, we began with a focus on an organization in the city-community, a church. We considered a church as a type of "community within a (city) community," and proposed a relationship between ties to the church-community and subscribing to the church newspaper. In other words, we questioned pointedly whether subscribing to the church paper could be related to integration with, i.e., ties to, the church-community.

Our focus on church (as community) was a matter of evidence in the literature as well as convenience--we were offered the opportunity through a request for a study of a church newspaper.

Our focus on subscribing was oriented to developing a concatenated theoretical view of newspaper subscribing. We had demonstrated a relationship between a person's "transitional stages" in a residential community and subscribing to residential community newspapers (Stamm and Weis, 1981a). We hoped to link an examination of structural ties to this explanation.

The literature, particularly Westley and Severin (1964) and the conceptualization of church organizations as a community inside the city-community suggested a second research question in line with the Janowitz hypothesis. Would ties to a church also be related to subscribing to commercial newspapers circulated in the city-community? The basis for this question is that ties to a church can reasonably be considered indicative of integration within the city-community.

In pursuing these questions, we proposed to study the church ties of membership in the church, identification with the church and active participation in church groups. The relevance of membership and participation seemed readily apparent. The concept of identification had proved to be a central, widely applicable kind of community tie in our research program up to that point.[3] Also, as we posed these questions, we set aside the notion of antecedent and consequent conditions--we needed first to establish correlations.

The question of additivity

Of particular interest to us, in line with theorizing spurred by the Janowitz hypothesis, was whether ties to more than one organization within the city-community would enhance the likelihood of subscribing to commercial newspapers. This in part was suggested by the findings of Westley and Severin (1964) describing a positive, linear relationship in which the percentage of non-readers declined as the number of memberships in community organizations increased. More recently McLeod and Choe (1978) reported that membership in local organizations increased the likelihood of reading a newspaper each day.

Only one study has investigated the possibility of subscribing being enhanced by the presence of particular combinations of structural ties. Stamm and Weis (1981b) developed and tested a typology based upon the various combinations of metropolitan identification and cosmopolitan orientation.[4] They found that individuals with both ties (called "metro-cosmolites") were the most frequent subscribers to metropolitan dailies, while metropolitans and cosmopolitans were very similar in their subscribing behaviors. These ties were not strictly structural, however, in the perspective of this article (e.g., in terms of ties to particular organizations within a city-community).

To deal with the additive question, we introduced ties to volunteer groups in the city-community. Specifically, we proposed that the incidence of subscribing should be greater among those active in both church groups and voluntary

associations than among those active in only one of the two. This expectation is consistent with the reasoning of the community integration hypothesis.

It should be explained, however, that there are also grounds for anticipating findings contrary to the community integration hypothesis. We were mainly concerned with relationships that emerge from the possibility that participation in voluntary associations is correlated with participation in church groups. Judging from some recent evidence (e.g., Brown and Daves, 1979; Stamm and Fortini-Campbell, 1983), there is considerable overlap among different community tie variables. Due to correlation among independent variables, the "second" variable may have a diminished effect, although some evidence of additivity would also be obtained. Or, it is conceivable that the relationship between subscribing and church group participation will disappear when participation in voluntary associations is introduced. This would suggest that the bivariate relationship observed between subscribing and church group participation could be an artifact of the correlation between participation in church groups and participation in voluntary associations (assuming they are found to be correlated).

Research questions

To sum up, this study pursued three general questions about newspaper subscribing and (structural) community ties:

First, are ties to a church associated with subscribing to the church newspaper?

Second, are ties to the church-community associated with subscribing to commercial newspapers circulated in the city-community of which the church is a part?

Third, when ties to church are combined with ties to volunteer associations in the city-community is the likelihood of subscribing enhanced as suggested by the community integration hypothesis?

Methods

As indicated previously, the present study was completed under a research contract with a local church, a Catholic diocese in the Northwest. This resulted in the study population being comprised of Catholic Church members. Ties to church were operationalized as follows:

(1) Membership--respondents were asked how long they had been members of their present parish. Those who had belonged five years or more were considered stable parish members, a conservative measure.

(2) Identification--we asked the respondents, "Imagine the people at (the parish) (the diocese) as a circle. Would you put yourself outside or inside the circle?" Those

who put themselves "inside" the parish or diocese were considered as identified. We had used this operationalization extensively and successfully in previous research efforts.

(3) Participation--respondents were asked to list the church-related groups in which they were active. Those who identified one or more groups were considered participants.

Questions were also included to ascertain participation in volunteer associations in the city-community. Those who reported being active in one or more groups were considered participants.

The dependent variable, subscribing, was established simply by asking whether the household subscribed to the newspaper. Separate questions were asked for the church (diocesan) newspaper, and for daily or weekly newspapers in their city-community.

Parallel to questionnaire development, a proportionate, random sample of parishioner households within the diocese was designed. Four parishes were randomly selected from each of five regions ("deaneries") within the diocese. The number of households randomly selected from each deanery and parish was weighted according to the number of members.

To obtain an adequate representation of subscribers for detailed statistical analyses, 44 percent of the households in the sample were chosen from the church newspaper's subscriber list, and 56 percent from parish directories. Our objective in using

both lists was to obtain roughly equal numbers of subscribers and non-subscribers to the church newspaper.

Telephone interviews with 500 parishioners, age 16 and over, were conducted in August, 1981, by trained, professional interviewers. Up to three callbacks were made on different days and at different times. Randomly selected replacements were substituted for those households at which interviews could not be obtained (i.e., refusal or no answer). Interviews were completed at 70 percent of the households in the final sample. Interviews were not completed at the remaining households due to refusals (10.6%) eligible respondents not at home (8.9%) and no answer (10.7%).

Results and Discussion

Since the sample was drawn from a population of Catholic church members, we will begin by looking at the overall frequencies of church and volunteer-association ties as well as newspaper subscribing (Table 1). Although the sample was comprised entirely of church members, there was still considerable variation in church ties. Most had been attending a particular local parish for more than five years, indicating considerable stability. This would suggest that church members represent a group with lower residential mobility than the overall population. But a much lower percentage expressed identification with their parish (66%), and with their local church diocese (45%). An even lower percentage reported being active in one or more of the many groups that

comprise the church-community (41%). Simply being a church member did not appear to contribute much to newspaper subscribing. Only 61 percent subscribed to the local church newspaper, while 44 percent subscribed to a local weekly or daily commercial newspaper in their city-community.

In regard to the first research question, all three of the church ties were positively associated with subscribing to the church newspaper (Table 2). Simply being a church member was the weakest predictor of subscribing, while active participation in church groups was the strongest.

Such a variation in the predictive value of church ties is evident also in the relationship of the church ties to subscribing to city newspapers (Table 3). Stable membership in a local church had little relationship to subscribing. Once again, the strongest predictor was the tie of active participation in church groups.

At this point we turn to the third research question, which requires examination of separate and joint relationships between commercial newspaper subscribing and ties to church and ties to volunteer associations. In the interest of comparability of the independent variables, we selected only the church tie of participation in church groups. Both participation in church groups and participation in volunteer associations were significantly related to subscribing (Table 4), but clearly the former was the much stronger of the two.

Before proceeding with a test of the hypothesis, we examined relationships between participation in volunteer associations and

the various church ties. This was advisable given the possibility correlation among the independent variables could lead to results other than those predicted by the community integration hypothesis. Results in Table 5 show that, by and large, individuals with church ties were not more likely to participate in volunteer associations, with one important exception. Persons who were active in church-related groups were somewhat more likely than other church members to be active in volunteer associations.

Considering the very modest positive relationship between these two variables, it seems unlikely that controlling for participation in volunteer organizations would provide evidence of an artifactual relationship by reducing the correlation between subscribing and participation in church groups. It seems more likely that a diminished effect from the second variable would result (e.g., the effect on subscribing resulting from both ties may not be <u>double</u> the effect of one tie).

Results in Table 6 are consistent with the additive effect predicted from the community integration hypothesis. There is no evidence of artifact. Differences in subscribing between participants and non-participants in church groups held up regardless of participation in volunteer associations. At the same time, the additive effect, while in evidence, was not as great as would be predicted from a strightforward application of the community integration hypothesis. Church group participation enhanced subscribing by 22% (from 32.6% to 54.9%), but participation in volunteer associations enhanced subscribing by only 8% (Table 6).

Summary

Summing up, our research questions have been answered as follows:

(1) Church ties were positively associated with subscribing to the church newspaper. The strength of the relationship varies, depending upon the kind of tie. Participation in church groups was the strongest covariant.

(2) Some ties to local churches were also positively associated with subscribing to local city-community newspapers. Here again, participation in church groups was most strongly related to subscribing.

(3) Consistent with the Janowitz (1952) community-integration hypothesis, two ties to (city) community organizations enhanced the likelihood of subscribing to city-community newspapers. Both participation in church groups and participation in volunteer groups were positively associated with subscribing to commercial newspapers, with church-group participation having the stronger relationship. Added together, these two ties indicate a stronger relationship to subscribing than either tie taken separately.

Table 1. Percent of persons with community ties and of newspaper subscribers.

Variable	f	%
Church member for more than five years[1]	392	78.4
Active participant in church group(s)	209	40.7
Identifies with parish[2]	329	65.9
Identifies with diocese	225	45.3
Active participant in volunteer associations	131	26.2
Subscribes to church paper[3]	305	61.0
Subscribes to city-community paper	219	43.8

n = 500

[1]Refers to membership in a particular local parish used as a conservative measure of membership.

[2]Catholic parishes in a Northwest diocese.

[3]Weekly newspaper with a circulation of approximately 18,000. Supported by subscription, advertising and diocesan subsidy.

Table 2. Percent of church-newspaper subscribing by church ties

Church tie	Percent Subscribing To church newspaper
Church member for more than five years	65.8*
Active participant in church group(s)	76.5*
Identifies with parish	68.0*
Identifies with diocese	72.4*

Differences tested by Chisquare test.

* = p <.001

Table 3. Percent of commercial newspaper[1] subscribing by church ties

Church tie:	Percent subscribing to city-community newspapers:
Church member for more than five years	45.7
Active participant in church groups	57.5*
Identifies with parish	48.4**
Identifies with diocese	56.0*

Differences tested by Chisquare test.

* = p <.001
** = p <.01

[1]Daily and/or weekly newspapers circulated in Northwest cities.

Table 4. Percent of commercial newspaper subscribing by participation in church and volunteer groups

Type of group	Percent of commercial newspaper subscribing:
Active Participant in church group(s)	57.5**
Active participant in volunteer group(s)	51.0*

Difference tested by Chisquare test.

* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .001$

Table 5. Participation in volunteer groups by ties to church

Church ties:	Percent participants:
Church member of more than five years	26.8
Active participant in church group(s)	33.5*
Identifies with parish	28.4
Identifies with diocese	27.1

Differences tested by Chisquare test.

* = $p < .01$

Table 6. Newspaper subscribing by participation in church and volunteer groups

Participates in:				
Volunteer group	No		Yes	
Church group	No (n=230)	Yes (n=133)	No (n=61)	Yes (n=67)
Percent subscribing to commercial papers	32.6	54.9	36.1	62.7

n = 491 (9 cases missing)

Footnotes

[1]The term,newspaper "use," is employed to subsume both newspaper readership and subscribing. We recognize that for empirical purposes these should be treated as separate and distinct variables.

[2]Community (as structure) refers to existing institutional arrangements, including organizations for trade, public services, government, etc. A key structural element of such organization is formal or informal agreement among members to follow certain rules, procedures and/or laws. Previous conceptualization distinguished community (as structure) from community as <u>place</u> (geographic territory) and community as <u>process</u> (the means by which community is created--e.g., communication). See Hillery, 1959, and Stamm and Fortini-Campbell, 1983.

[3]For a full explication of community identification, see Stamm and Fortini-Campbell (1983).

[4]Metropolitan identification was operationally defined as placing oneself inside a circle representing the metropolitan community (as structure); cosmopolitan orientation was defined by the individual's score on Dye's index of cosmopolitanism.

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